

The Collins Mausoleum # 1

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I would like to thank Jean Graham and Geoffrey Hamell for their support and editorial advice. Both of these fine writers assisted me with proofreading my work. I am grateful that neither of them mentioned that an English teacher should not need this kind of help.

I wanted this fanzine to have tangible links to the rich literary past that has been spawned by **Dark Shadows**. Geoff’s short story brought much needed diversity to this project and is reminiscent of the fiction in his fanzine **The Eagle Hill Sentinel**. I also am indebted to Jean for her generosity in granting and encouraging my wish to continue her wonderful *Epitaphs* series.

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Requests for possible future issues and email may be sent to quentincollinsii@aol.com. Submissions of creative material will also be gratefully accepted. This fanzine will be distributed solely by electronic means, thus eliminating the need to charge any money for subscriptions.

The Caretaker's Comments

By Joe Escobar

This is an experiment. Over the years, I'd made several attempts to start a fanzine. I was always stymied by the mundane and practical details, money being primary among them. I've always been in awe of those laudable souls who were able to get enough capital and subscribers together to produce a reasonably cost-effective product. Just consider the obstacles that present themselves when editing a fanzine. Paper is heavy and it's not cheap to move it from one address to another. Add to that the time consuming task of stuffing and addressing envelopes. There's also the problem of 'zines that mysteriously get lost or damaged in the mail. Who's responsible for paying in that event? I want to bypass all of that. No money will change hands here.

Here it is, then, my first real fanzine. Years ago, I did collaborate with some friends and we created a local DS newsletter in the Rio Grande Valley. To commemorate that partnership, I'm using the artwork from the first and only issue of *Shadowzine*. It was a wonderful concept; travel from library to library and have showings of DS episodes on a regular basis. This was back when the Valley did not receive the Sci-Fi Channel and the MPI tapes were hard to find. Although we did have a number of meetings, they never grew large enough to warrant a second newsletter.

Here's the plan. I'm putting together the first one, mostly using my own material and a couple of pieces from some friends. I'll distribute it out, via email, to people I know. Hopefully, they will read and enjoy the issue. Then they are free to send it out to their friends and so on. With luck, we might be able to establish a respectable readership

I don't have the time, or the desire, to write the bulk of a fanzine by myself again. I want to read and enjoy other people's work. Ideally, as this thing makes the rounds, someone will say, "Hey, I have something to contribute!" If that's the case, send your work along, and we'll get it out.

I'm going to anticipate a question. Why do this in fanzine form? It's all electronic. Why bother to structure it like a magazine? I plan to print a copy or two for myself. I might even send a couple of copies via snail mail to a select few. Call me old-fashioned, but I miss the nostalgia of having an actual fanzine in my hands.

Before I close, I have two rules for submissions. First and foremost, I will not print any serials or continued stories until I have the entire work at my disposal. I don't want to disappoint our readers with stories that remain unresolved. We never know which issue will be our last. For all I know, this may be the first and only issue of this publication.

Second - and this one is up for discussion - I'd like to stick with a PG rating. Those who know me can attest that I'm not a prude, but I'd like all of our readers to be able to share this with children. I watch DS with my 11-year-old daughter, and I'd like to be able to print a copy for her and not worry about the suitability of the material.

That's about it, for now. I hope you read and enjoy this first issue of *The Collins Mausoleum*. If you know someone who might also be interested in receiving it, pass it on.

Please address all subscription requests, comments or questions to
quentincollinsii@aol.com.

Addiction

By Joe Escobar

*Historical Note-This story takes place between the **Big Finish** audio productions **The Book of Temptation** and **The Christmas Presence**. If you've not heard them, I recommend that you do so as soon as possible. They can be ordered from www.doctorwho.co.uk or www.darkshadowsreborn.com*

Barnabas nearly gagged as he forced the scarlet liquid down his throat. The fact that it had been poured in the finest crystal goblet Collinwood had to offer did nothing to make the foul-tasting fluid any more palatable. It did slake his thirst, a bit, but not the urge to go out into the night...to prowl. He forced the remainder of the offending substance down his throat, barely resisting the urge to hurl the empty receptacle into the fire place of the drawing room. He was only restrained by the knowledge that such an action would give Angelique enormous satisfaction. He tried not to look miserable under the weight of her scrutiny.

Tossing blonde ringlets back, she reclined on the ancient but comfortable sofa, sipping brandy. "Quentin has impeccable taste when it comes to spirits." Barnabas was tempted to fling the goblet at her, but chose to smile weakly instead. He wondered, not for the first time, if she could even taste the drink. Since her resurrection, she'd complained, in a moment of weakness, about her inability to feel. She was back, but not completely alive. Most likely, she sat there, pretending to enjoy the creature comfort of a nightcap, merely to annoy him. Indeed, the whole idea of a nightcap was probably meaningless, since he doubted she even needed to sleep. Angelique inquired, "How's yours?"

"It will do."

"Will it? I do so enjoy the fine things in life." Her eyes twinkled mischievously. "We always shared that in common."

"Sometimes we must make accommodations."

"That's where we differ. I never make concessions. Others bend to me." She regarded him sardonically. "Cow's blood. Not your usual vintage." He tried to remain impassive. Of late he'd been attempting to ingest animal plasma as a substitute. An aborted attempt at this had been made once before. When Willie had released him from his chained coffin, some years ago, he'd attacked some livestock, causing near panic. Farmers, fearing for their livelihood, had been confining the cattle indoors, guarding them carefully. Barnabas had decided that the risk of exposure was unacceptable. It was sadly ironic, but society was more protective of property than they were of the unwanted denizens of the waterfront.

At that time, his attempts to find a substitute for human nourishment had been more a matter of expedience than altruism. He'd awakened disillusioned, a man 171 years out of his element. A man? He wondered yet again, if that word still applied to him. His conscience had lain buried beneath the adamantine and unrelenting shell of the vampire. It did beckon to him, but only after the fact, its call ever weakening with each victim.

Various attempts at a cure had been made. Eric Lang and Julia Hoffman had both toiled, with various degrees of success. Once, when Barnabas had time-traveled to 1840, he had reconciled with Angelique. Renouncing the dark arts, she'd released him from the curse. Unfortunately, it was waiting for him upon his return. For a few wonderful hours, he'd felt free,

but with nightfall came the relentless call for blood. Along with it came his need to sleep away the daylight hours. He'd realized Angelique had the power to revoke her curse, but not that of Jeb Hawkes. In the present, he still suffered from the Leviathan leader's wrath.

Even though no permanent solution had been found, each respite from his curse had strengthened and nourished the feeble remnant of humanity that had valiantly struggled to survive. Now, in this new body, the vampire's beckoning was as powerful as ever.

The Angelique who regarded him with that infuriatingly mocking gaze was not the human woman who had forgiven him in the 19th Century. While she still had moments of what might be taken for humanity, she was as self-absorbed as ever.

She claimed to love him, and on some level, Barnabas believed she did.

Her love reminded him of his father's adoration of his treasured retriever. Orion had been the only animal Joshua Collins had ever allowed indoors, even on occasion. Obedient, affectionate, and hard-working, the dog had been his prize possession. He often quipped that Orion was the one being he could trust completely with a task. He rarely had to be whacked lightly with the riding crop for any indiscretion. He came when called, was unerring in his hunting duties, and was ever mindful of his master's needs.

Joshua Collins had been, if nothing else, a pragmatic man. In spite of this tendency, years after Orion had passed his prime; Joshua had refused to supplant him with a younger dog. Though the poor wretch had been hobbled by arthritis and woefully inadequate to the tasks set before him, Joshua had exhibited extraordinary patience towards making a myriad of excuses. Eventually it became obvious to everyone else in the Collins household that Orion was suffering. Joshua angrily refused to recognize this, and railed against his brother Jeremiah when he suggested it might be kinder to put him down. It was a relief to everyone but Joshua when Orion failed to greet his master upon his return from the shipyards. An extensive search of the Collins estate had failed to produce hide or hair of the loyal and dependable creature. Both Barnabas and his father had suspected that someone had done what Joshua was not strong enough on this to do on this occasion. Barnabas was not sure if it had been Jeremiah or the servant Ben, but he was convinced one of them had taken on the grim task.

Angelique interrupted his reverie. "Barnabas, face facts. I have made you a predator once again. You can't change your nature." Her expression was now stern, no longer teasing.

"Why did you do it? Why couldn't you let me rest in peace?"

"Rest in peace? I freed you from the Striga. Would you have preferred I let him continue feeding upon your soul? Better to be to the predator than the prey."

"You could have given me complete liberty; instead you chained me to you. I'm as much your prisoner as I was his. Worse, I'm trapped in this unfamiliar body."

"Your soul needed a body, and yours was unavailable. You have a great measure of freedom, Barnabas. You may come and go as you wish."

"I'm not free to love, to be human."

"You can have love, my darling." She arose from the sofa, arms outstretched.

He backed away, his face a grim mask. "Why won't you accept that that is no longer possible?"

Her metallic blue eyes blazed with passion. "Because I don't believe that it's so! In 1840 you discovered that you loved me. Let's rekindle that flame." She approached him.

"NEVER!" His vehemence startled even him. The last time you returned...."

Her visage darkened dangerously, her ire almost rivaling his. "I tried to deceive myself and renounce my true nature. The truth is, I am damned. There can be no redemption for me. I've accepted it. Why don't you?"

"Because I can't resign myself to utter despair!"

She laughed bitterly. "Go then, wallow in animal gore! You're only denying what you are, what I have made you. Give in to your baser instincts; you'll be all the happier for it. The pangs of your conscience will subside, with time. The agony you feel now will only become keener."

"I wouldn't be able to tolerate that." They were startled to hear Quentin enter the room, his pleasant, even features regarding them severely. "Both of you are on probation here at Collinwood. I warned you. Step out of line, either of you, and I won't hesitate to kill you." He made his way to the fireplace, still not ready to remove the heavy jacket he wore. He began to warm his hands by the fire.

"Quentin, you are so tedious." Angelique turned to confront him. "Summoning me was the easy part. Banishing me would not be—"

Quentin interrupted her. "Angelique, do you really think I would have brought you here if I didn't have a way to send you back? I need you to help me locate the family, but I won't trade their well-being for the lives of others." His brown locks reflected the light from the hearth as he spoke.

"I've played poker with you, Quentin. I know you've honed bluffing to an art."

"Raise or call then. It's your choice."

Barnabas sighed wearily. "I need air. Feel free to destroy each other while I am away." With that he strode from the room and out into the night. He could have changed form and flown to Collinsport, but the desire to feed always felt more intense when he was the bat. It was as if the rest of his humanity was dormant and the vampire asserted more control. He also chose not to drive. Much of the tedium of the evening would be expended on the walk to town and back.

It was a windy, biting autumn night. Few leaves still resided on the trees, and those that did had been served their eviction notices. Unlike Quentin, he was heedless of the frigidity that had burrowed its way to Quentin's bones. In fact, he was grateful for the uninviting weather, since it was unlikely he'd encounter anyone on his way.

He was not sure where he was going. He put the wharf area off limits. He'd almost certainly surrender to his lusts there. The Blue Whale Tavern was almost as dangerous. On a weeknight the place was relatively safe. The few regulars who showed up mostly came to be by themselves or chat with acquaintances. On Friday or Saturday, well, that was a different story. That was when the younger crowd transformed the quiet tavern into a rowdy night club. The scent of teeming humanity and their lusts would be more than he could bear.

Consulting his watch, he realized that he still had time to have a cup of coffee and a chat with Maggie Evans before she closed the coffee shop. Seeing her would be bittersweet. As far as she knew, he was almost a stranger, the namesake of the Barnabas Collins who was her friend. Wearing this alien body, he was forced to continue the charade that he was yet another cousin from England, a distant relative of the Barnabas that she knew. Still, he enjoyed her company, and in time, perhaps, their relationship would be as close as it once was.

He entered the inn's dining room and was greeted by the usual aroma of coffee and stench of stale tobacco smoke. Maggie kept the place clean and in reasonably good repair, but

the furnishings were starting to look shabby. "Well, hello there!" Maggie's face brightened when he arrived. "Is Willie doing OK?" She stopped scrubbing the chipped Formica counter.

"Yes, he's almost fully recovered."

"Pull up a chair then, and keep me company. I'm waiting until the last train arrives and then I'm closing up. Coffee's free tonight, if you don't mind the remnants of this pot. If you want it fresh, I'll have to charge you."

He took a seat at the counter, opposite her. "What you have on hand is fine."

She smiled and turned to pour him a cup. "How do you take it?"

"Black is fine." Being undead, he did not eat or drink, of course. He generally sat close enough to the waste can to surreptitiously pour at least half of the liquid into it when she was not looking. Maggie rarely sat still when she was working. Even as the proprietor, it was hard to divorce herself from the "if there's time to lean, there's time to clean" mindset. If worse came to worse, he could choke down a few sips. Coffee, after all, is mainly water. It would mingle with the blood in his system and be consumed with it. Still, drinking anything but blood was unpleasant in his undead state.

True to form, the pleasantries exchanged, Maggie once again went about her work cleaning the counter. "Of course you do."

"What do you mean?"

"Barnabas, the Barnabas I knew, always took it black as well. Where is he any way? Will he be back again?"

"He had business in England. He may be away for some time."

"So he sent you here to keep an eye on things?"

"I wouldn't put it that way. I'm here because my family needs me."

"Hmm, from where I sit it's just you and Quentin. Not much of a family. I don't count that Angelique as family. Do you?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes I do. She was married to a Collins."

"Anyone I know?"

"No, another distant relative."

"They keep crawling out of the woodwork." She blushed. "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean you. It's just that, well, I just don't like her." The last time Angelique had returned she'd erased any trace of Maggie's memory of her. At least she thought she'd eradicated it all. When they were reintroduced, Maggie had disliked her instantly, which had not been the case when they'd met in 1968. "Honestly, I don't understand why so many people come to Collinsport. It's certainly no hot spot."

"It's my ancestral home."

"OK, that explains you, but why Angelique? It's not her ancestral home."

"She's here at Quentin's request, to help him find the family."

"I guess that explains it", but she looked far from convinced. "Still, if I were away from here, nothing would drag me back."

"If you don't mind my asking, then, why don't you leave? You certainly could. If you sold the inn, you'd have money to start over."

"Don't think I haven't seriously considered it. I almost left once. I put the inn up for sale and even had a serious offer. Some guy wanted to turn it into a Best Western."

"What happened?"

She sighed heavily. "My fiancé had a nervous breakdown. He was confined to Windcliff, a sanitarium that's a ways from here. He was released, but we were warned he'd be

fragile for a while. His mother moved in here. She'd had a stroke and needed to be somewhere where someone could look after her. I only charged her a quarter of her social security check. I'd have let her stay free, but she insisted. Anyway, I made that a deal breaker. I told the buyer, she stays at a fixed rate or the deal was off. He walked. Every time I make plans to leave here, something conspires to make me stay."

A feeling of *déjà vu* enveloped him. It was here that he'd first met Maggie Evans. He'd come in, just to pass the tedium of the night. He'd been struck instantly by her resemblance to Josette, his lost love. Then, as now, she'd been open and friendly, but very frank and direct. He gazed at her intently as she concentrated her attentions on a stain on the counter. Involuntarily, he felt himself begin to retreat into the bloodlust. His senses became more acute; he could hear her heart beating, drowning out what she was saying.

"Barnabas!" The sound of her voice impelled him to beat the urges down, at least slightly.

"I'm sorry, you were saying?" He gripped the counter tightly, as if to prevent himself from lunging at her.

"I asked if Angelique plans to stay long."

"I'm sorry. I was lost in thought. I don't know. She has not confided her plans with me."

"You do seem preoccupied. Not a good sign. Maybe the ghosts of Collinwood are already sucking you in." She laughed, only half joking.

At that moment, her resemblance to Josette became more acute. Her laughter caused the muscles and veins in her neck to quiver and her heartbeat filled his ears once again. He thought, *I must get to Collinwood. I need sustenance.* His mind rebelled at the thought of ingesting more of that vile substance. He arose abruptly. "Maggie, I must go."

"Oh, OK then," she replied, slightly startled and maybe just a bit hurt.

"I'm sorry; I just remembered...the doctor prescribed some medication for Willie. I need to make sure that he takes it."

She brightened, her eyebrows raised. "You got Willie to see a doctor?"

"Yes, it wasn't easy."

"I'll bet. Well then, you'd better go. I don't trust Willie to take care of himself. Anyone who'd go back to Collinwood when he has other options needs looking after."

Barnabas nodded and strode quickly out onto the street. The craving for blood consumed him. He decided to take the quickest route to Collinwood. It would necessitate passing the Blue Whale, but he decided to risk it. The alternate route was longer; he decided that the fastest route was also the safest.

Before long the briny scent of the Atlantic assailed his nostrils. Sea water, so close in composition to that of human blood, fueled the lust that raged within. He heard a loud male voice yell, "Hey come, back here!" He saw a feminine form striding away from the tavern.

She turned, not watching where she was going, and addressed the angry man. "Fu- She never finished what she was about to say. Instead, she collided with Barnabas. Her anger flared momentarily. She started to say something, and then her face brightened when she gazed up at Barnabas. "I'm sorry. I guess I wasn't looking where I was going."

"I'm sorry, as well. I was not paying attention."

"Well, no harm done. Listen. That guy's bothering me. Do you think you could walk me home?" She smiled, more than a bit lasciviously.

He nodded grimly and allowed her to lead the way into the night.

Shadows in the Snow

By Geoffrey A. Hamell

This story is copyrighted by the author, and is not intended to infringe on any copyrights held by the producers of *Dark Shadows*. It originally appeared as a Halloween post at the now-defunct *Twisted Corners* website, and is reproduced here with the author's permission.

* * * * *

This story is part of a larger history; some of it has been told, some is yet to be revealed. Put your eye to the stereopticon, and watch the images flicker by...

1715

Octavia clutched the baby tighter to her breast, panic rising within her. "You cannot mean that you would turn us away? We have come so far..."

Elias' Collins' face was grim, the firelight bringing no more warmth to it than it gave to the drawing room's shadowed corners. "The fact that my late father was senile enough to marry you does not make you a member of this family. There is no place at Collinwood for a woman of your... type."

She looked pleadingly to Rebecca, but that lady's haughty stare offered no hope that she would side against her husband. "Please," Octavia begged, "whatever you may think of me, you could not reject my child. *Your father's child...*"

Elias' cheek twitched. "Isaac Collins abandoned his family thirty-five years ago. He had no need for his children then; I have no need for his child now. Take your brat and get out."

"Wait." Rebecca rose to face her husband challengingly. "The woman is a wanton, or a fortune-hunter. Let her go. But the child is still a Collins. He belongs here."

Elias reddened. "Do you dispute me, madame?"

"Aye!" Sudden bitterness throbbed in her voice. "You have no heir, Elias Collins! Your hatred robbed me of my son. Now Fate has brought me a second chance - and you will not rob me of this one! Never!"

Elias took a step backward, startled by her vehemence. There was a dangerous look in her eyes. He glanced at the infant, scowling. "Very good," he said at last, thickly. "Take him, then - and be damned to you!" He stalked out of the room and stamped noisily on the stairs.

Rebecca turned to Octavia expectantly. The girl cringed. "My baby..." she protested weakly.

"You cannot provide for him," the older woman said firmly. "You said so yourself. I can. If you truly love him, you will give him up to me."

Octavia whirled and ran to the front doors, pressing the infant to her protectively. She tugged one door open - and a blast of arctic wind nearly knocked them over, scattering snow across the narrow foyer. It began to pile around her feet.

"He will not survive a night in that," said Rebecca in a low voice.

Slowly, painfully, Octavia turned. "His name is Nahum," she said, tears on her cheeks. "Isaac chose it."

Rebecca nodded. "He will be raised as befits a Collins. He will be heir to this house." She held out her arms, and Octavia slowly surrendered her son. Wordlessly, she started to leave.

Rebecca spoke from behind her. "My husband's brother, Theodore, lives in a house called Seaview. It lies along the cliff path, some miles south of here. We do not speak to them."

The door shut behind Octavia. Violent winds tore at her, blinding her with clouds of snow. Icy water soaked through her thin boots. *Miles...*

Slowly, hopelessly, she began to trudge toward the cliff path.
And the snow continued to fall...

1750

Michael Collins was lost. In all his six years, he had never had such a disturbing experience. He had only gone for a little walk in the snow, not so very far at all - and now suddenly Seaview was nowhere in sight, and the air was starting to grow very cold... and the sky was beginning to get dark.

Michael remembered stories he had heard, and was afraid. There were wolves in the woods at night, and big black bears, and a Dark Man who wanted people's soles. He glanced at his own boots fearfully.

"Help!" he called out. "I am lost! Help!"

"Hallo!" a distant voice answered.

Relieved, Michael bellowed, "Help! I am lost! Help! Help!" He heard footsteps crunching in the snow, branches being pushed aside, and at length two figures appeared through the trees. They were Master Nahum Collins' twin sons, Joshua and Ezekiel.

Michael stopped shouting, eyeing the big fifteen-year-olds warily. He did not understand about the Collinwood people, how they could be part of the family and yet treat his parents almost like strangers. He was supposed to greet them politely at church, yet he could tell that his father and Master Nahum Collins did not like each other. It all had to do with someone named "Old Elias" who had done something awful a long time ago... he thought.

Ezekiel and Joshua returned his gaze for a silent moment, their faces reflecting the suspicion and dislike that their parents felt for Michael's. Then they slowly exchanged a crafty glance as realization sank in.

There were no adults here to say "no".

"Well, well," exclaimed Ezekiel, "can this be who it seems?"

"Why, it is!" Joshua followed his lead, as always. "What can little Cousin Michael be doing out here?"

"I am lost," said Michael uneasily.

"Lost!" cried Ezekiel. "Dear Lord, child, do you not know your danger? A small fellow like you could die of the cold! Look, the snow is beginning again!"

"Aye," agreed Joshua. "Had we not happened by, you could have wandered in vain forever."

"Till Judgment Day," Ezekiel nodded. "Or worse! You could fall into a deep, deep mountain of snow and never get out. Ever." With a sudden swift pounce he grabbed Michael by the scruff of the neck, lifting the struggling boy high into the air.

"Let me go!" he screamed. "Let me go! My father - "

"Your father will never know!" laughed Ezekiel wildly. "You will never be found, little cousin!"

"Never be found, never be found," chanted Joshua wickedly.

"Tally-ho!" cried his brother, flinging his flailing captive into the center of a huge, partly hardened snowdrift.

“Aaaaah!” Michael’s yells became a wordless shriek.

“Bury him!” whooped Ezekiel, scooping huge armfuls of snow and dumping them on Michael’s head as he sank deeper with every frantic movement. Joshua joined in, shouting laughter and making faces.

Michael could no longer scream. The snow covered his mouth. His arms were pinned against his sides by its entombing weight. His legs were buried. All of him was buried.

From somewhere a muffled voice taunted him.

*The north wind doth blow
And we shall have snow,
And what will cock robin do then, poor thing?*

Then silence. He was all alone in the terrible enclosing whiteness - alone with the certainty that he was going to die here. Alone with the heart-clutching fear. All alone...

And he couldn’t get out. The snow was too heavy. He couldn’t move. Even if he could, the terrible cousins would only be waiting to bury him again. Or maybe they would kill him outright.

He never knew how long he lay there, numbness creeping into his bones, horror eating away at his mind. It could have been hours. It could have been a lifetime.

Then, finally, in a swift unstoppable wave, came the panic of hysteria. His mouth filled with snow, but he screamed anyway. His limbs were buried, but he thrashed insanely - kicked and clawed and pushed and heaved until, impossibly, the white tomb trembled - then shook - then exploded outward!

Air, freezing but wonderful, blew into his face, pelted him with still-falling snowflakes. Night darkness enveloped him, thank God for the darkness! He flopped on his belly and lay sobbing soundlessly, not even trying to rise.

The Collinwood boys were no longer there. But someone else had come.

Slowly, he looked up and saw the lady.

“Help me...” she moaned softly.

He whimpered.

Snow was in her stiff, matted hair, and on her face, and on her dress, and on her shoes. She spoke, and there was snow in her mouth.

“I am lost,” she whispered hollowly. “Lost... Please help me.”

He shrank back, back into the snow, shaking his head wordlessly.

Slowly, stiffly, she took a step nearer. There was ice in her eyes.

“Please...” she sighed. “Where is... Seaview?”

“How much farther?” snapped John Robert Collins.

“Just ahead,” said Joshua guiltily. To Ezekiel’s disgust, he had confessed their “joke” as soon as they got home. He glanced nervously at his father, but Nahum Collins’ expression was as grim as Cousin John Robert’s.

“I am certain that he is all right,” Joshua ventured.

The shriek split the night sky, a frenzied, barely human wail that went on and on without end.

“My God!” cried John Robert. “That is my son!” He dashed ahead through the trees, Nahum and Joshua close upon his heels.

Michael sat in a corner of the clearing, his head slowly moving from side to side, his eyes staring wildly. From his mouth the unearthly scream flowed mindlessly, never stopping when his father came rushing to his side... never stopping until long after his voice gave out completely

and only soundless air emerged.

And the snow continued to fall...

1760

Ezekiel Collins stumbled on a snow-buried root, cursed savagely, and took out his aggravation on his hapless companion. "Stop lagging, damn your eyes!" he barked over his shoulder. "You move like a cripple!"

Michael, whose eyes were nearly always fixed on the ground, managed to lower them even more. He bit his lip sullenly.

Why was he out here in this frozen mess at all, Ezekiel wondered again, when he could be snug at home with a series of rum toddies, or bouncing Betsy on his knee at the Eagle Tavern? Who cared if some stupid farmers had lost their chickens to a lynx? What made it the special province of the Collins family to hunt it down? He was a gentleman, not some pelt-peddling mountain boy!

He could have borne it, perhaps, if the weather were decent, or if he had a proper human being for company - brother Joshua, finest of companions, or Emory of the keen eye and steady arm. But Joshua and Emory had gone off to do battle with the French - fighting frogs in Canada when they were needed at home. And so he was left with Michael - mumbling, whey-faced little Michael, who would not look a rabbit in the eye, let alone a wildcat. He could barely abide the little lickspigot at the best of times.

And it began to snow again. Wonderful!

Ezekiel cast a jaundiced eye at the ravine ahead, rather hoping that the trail they were following would be totally obscured and he would have an excuse to turn homeward. But wait... He squinted. A few moments more and the new snow would have covered them - but there was a heavy criss-crossing of tracks down below, and a pile of fresh fewmets. They were close, very close.

"Stay here," he ordered Michael in a low voice. "And keep a sharp watch. It may be near."

He began to carefully pick his way down the steep hillside, booted feet clinging as best they could to the half-hardened snow. He did not really expect any help from Michael should the lynx appear; it all rested with Ezekiel's own skill and quick action.

He tripped on another root, flailed wildly for a moment, and pitched forward helplessly, rolling and bumping his way to the bottom of the rocky gulch. He landed in a mound of snow, but there was hard, pointed stone underneath, and he hit it with one leg beneath him. There was a snap like a pistol shot, and agony exploded in his thigh.

Pain leapt like fire in the broken leg as Ezekiel forced himself up onto his elbows. Through tear-blurred eyes he could see his worthless cousin looking down from the ridge, unmoving.

"Michael!" he bawled. "Get down here! Can you not see that I am hurt?"

A snarl. He knew what it was before he turned his head. The lynx crouched not ten feet away, claws extended, yellow eyes glaring. He had fallen right into its lair.

His flintlock had landed a dozen feet away. He could not move to reach it. He tried to inch an arm just a little nearer, and the cat hissed, tufted ears twitching.

"Michael," he quavered, not daring to shout. "Shoot it. In God's name, boy!"

Michael raised his rifle, sighted, and fired.

Ezekiel shrieked in anguish as the bullet tore through his good leg, shattering bone. The lynx bounded away with a yowl, panicked.

“You moron!” screamed Ezekiel. “You utter imbecile! You hit me!”

“Yes,” said Michael. “I know.” He smiled, and the look in his eyes choked the words in Ezekiel’s throat.

“You...” he whispered at last. “You little bastard.”

“The north wind doth blow

And we shall have snow,” said Michael, smiling.

Ezekiel’s face turned as white as the falling snow that flecked it.

Michael’s voice was soft. “And what will cock robin do then, poor thing?” He turned and walked away.

“Michael!” screamed a voice somewhere behind him. “Come back! Don’t do this! Don’t leave me here! Michael! *Michael!*”

Michael Collins continued to walk; and for the first time in his life he walked with his head held high, with the firm and decisive stride of a man. Lightning-bugs danced in his John Thomas, and he looked down to see his trousers bulging in the oddest manner.

And the snow continued to fall...

... covering everything.

Epitaph: Roxanne Drew

By Joe Escobar

This story is affectionately dedicated to Jean Graham, whose arc of “Epitaphs” inspired me to write this story. For more information about Jean’s work, please refer to the article on page 24.

I used to liken myself to a pawn. Life, then, is the chessboard on which my destiny was never my own. The day I was born my future was planned out for me, by my loving but stern father. His strategy: find me a “suitable” husband who would care for me in the manner in which he’d always provided for me.

My youth was reasonably happy. Sometimes I longed to run outside and play as my brother Randall and his friends did. Instead, I was forced to be content to sit in the shade, reading books, drawing, or engaging in other feminine artistic pursuits. I rarely rebelled as my sister Samantha did. I was able to use books to fill the void. Via their magic, I was allowed to roam free as a bird through realms as majestic as any visited by Randall and his friends. My treks took me to castles inhabited by chivalrous knights and damsels, worlds of magic where the witches and monsters never prevail.

Samantha would often be scolded for coming home with her shoe’s soaked with morning dew or her dresses soiled by mud. Mother, exasperated, would ask how she’d ever expect to find a husband if she continued to behave this way. Mother and Father already had their sights set on Collinwood. Only Quentin would do. Thankfully, I was never promised in their minds to Gabriel. The pauper cripple was not a suitable match. Poverty and disability were not the attributes that repelled me. Gabriel was a bitter and twisted man, and life with him would be a living hell. I pitied Edith.

Lamar Trask was not Father’s first choice, but one cannot be choosy in Collinwood. Families whose names I’ve forgotten in Bangor and Boston were contacted, and there was some initial interest. In the end, though, my father was forced to set his sights closer to home. Mr. Trask, an undertaker by trade and a man of simple tastes, had amassed a reasonable fortune.

Father and Lamar had shaken hands and made arrangements before either of them deigned to speak to me about them. When I was finally informed, I was less than enthused. My father asked, "He is pious and successful. What more could any woman want?" I did not answer. He took my silence for assent, and it was, for a time.

I had always been the dutiful sister. I did not love Lamar, but then Mother told me she did not love Father when they met. She proclaimed, "He was respectable and kind. I had faith that those were seeds from which love would take root." I was skeptical but open-minded. I remembered how much Samantha had loved Quentin Collins in the beginning. That love had eroded away until all that remained was mutual respect and civility. Before he was lost at sea, the two were little more than casual acquaintances. Perhaps Mother was right. Quentin, as it turned out, was not Samantha's knight in shining armor. Perhaps Lamar would show more promise.

Cautiously and tentatively, I allowed Lamar to court me. Father humored me by being patient and understanding, having faith that I would "make the sensible choice". The first step was to attend his church. His father had been the famous - or infamous, depending upon one's point of view - Reverend Trask. As his son, he was a pillar in that community. When Reverend Johnson prayed, Lamar responded with the first "AMEN!" When it was time for a hymn, Lamar's booming voice led the throng. He made sure his piety was both visible and audible. When the basket was produced, Lamar made certain that no one would contribute more than he had. It did not occur to me until much later that he profited from his generosity. His donations insured that the minister would be an influential ally when the time came to recommend an undertaker.

In like manner, I was naively impressed by his visits to the sick and infirm. Whenever one was ailing, a visit from Mr. Trask could be expected. Had he held a monopoly in Collinsport, these distasteful duties would have been unnecessary. Unfortunately for Lamar, Mr. Jarrett from Rockport had been poaching his territory.

All this was unknown to me for many months. My eyes opened when I heard the maids at Collinwood gossiping. Mrs. Fillmore, a widowed spinster who had made many dresses for me, was being evicted from her home. Her son had drowned in a fishing accident. It was a mystery to me how she'd managed to pay for a decent funeral. Many of the poor had to be buried in pauper's graves; her son was interred in Eagle Hill Cemetery. I discovered that the man I was expected to marry had taken a lien on Mrs. Fillmore's property. The terms of the loan outlined very strict timetables for repayment. She'd failed to meet the letter of the law and was to be thrown out of her home. As if that was not shameful enough, Lamar Trask had been the author of the whole sordid "arrangement." He had convinced her that the scandal of a pauper's burial would announce to the whole town that she did not love her son. Worse, he implied that those who were buried in such graves might "not be looked upon favorably by the Almighty."

Against the protest of my parents, I announced that I never wished to see him again. We argued bitterly on that score, Father and I. It was the first time I openly defied him. Oh, I had disobeyed him on occasion, but I'd never faced him and refused to carry out one of his wishes. I think he was close to disowning me. I'll never know if it was his love for me, or some premonition that I would later relent, that kept him from doing just that.

This sets the stage for the tragedy, or the fairy tale, that was my life. Yes, I think it was the latter, but one that did not end happily ever after. In this grim little yarn the witches and monsters triumphed. Lamar was the evil prince who kept me prisoner in the tower, forcing me to marry against my will.

I was not fortunate enough to have a champion. I thought Barnabas Collins was to be my valiant knight, riding in to rescue me at the last moment. He was someone of whom Father would have approved. Next to a wealthy Collins from England, Lamar Trask might as well have been a lowly fisherman! But alas, it was not to be. My bold hero, you see, was married. He swooped in, raised me to dizzying heights, only to allow me to careen headlong back to earth.

I should hate him as I loathe her, Angelique. Their unholy partnership nearly consigned me to an eternity of half life, subsisting upon the vitality of others. Ironically, my story did have a brave knight in the end. Randall, my brother, rode in, slew the beast and freed the maiden. The only rub: in the end, the two were one and the same.

I hear those at Rose Cottage calling me. Leticia is begging me to speak, and Barnabas is there! This is my chance to expose Angelique. But worry not, Barnabas, in spite of all that has happened I will keep your secret even now. You will always have my undying love! DAMN YOU!

A Review of **Cardboard Signs** (starring Christopher Pennock)

By Joe Escobar



Cardboard Signs is an indie film that is written and directed by Brandon Miller. In it, Chris Pennock portrays a homeless man named Mel, who lives in a cardboard box with his girlfriend, Sally. It's a touching short piece about the plight of the homeless. The film opens with a view of a garbage dump, where we see their "home." Cut to the interior and Mel wakes up, kisses Sally, and wishes her a happy anniversary. He then goes off to panhandle enough for a modest celebration, one beer for each of them that evening.

This film breaks the stereotypes about the homeless. Neither Mel nor Sally take drugs or drink to excess; they are not mentally challenged, nor are they physically handicapped. We empathize with them, because they are so normal. The morning kiss, the anniversary celebration, their devotion to each other, all dare us to merely dismiss them as "derelicts". In less than a half hour, Miller allows us to view them as people who have hopes and dreams for the future.

We are reminded, through Mel's eyes, about how the homeless are viewed by our society. Contempt is evident when two young punks promise a donation and fling a soft drink in his face instead. Pity comes from the young lady who offers him some kind words of comfort. He is regarded with suspicion in a laundromat when he begins to disrobe, standing shirtless in

front of the machine while he washes his clothes. Perhaps not totally unreasonably, this behavior discomfits the lady next to him. A bit of trivia here: the lady is played by Lynn Pennock, Chris's wife.

I enjoyed the film, but was left wondering why this man could not find a job. He is evidently, quite intelligent, amiable, and does not appear to have many vices. Unless I'm misinformed, there are agencies whose mission it is to assist the homeless to find jobs. I think the film would have been stronger if these questions had been addressed.

Still, despite these questions, I thoroughly enjoyed this film. I find it refreshing to watch independent films; they remind us that stories do not always require lavish special effects, a multi-million-dollar budget, and celebrity actors to tell a story. All tales do not need to be feature-length. In literature, there are novels, novellas, and short stories, with the amount of plot dictating the length of the text. It's regrettable that there aren't many forums for short subjects in the realm of cinema.

Cardboard Signs is available for free viewing on *You Tube*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90q0xoIBo3U>.

Images from the **Dark Shadows Festival**

Originally I had planned to publish a feature about this year's DS Festival. However, the electronic age has made such a report seem out of date. Before I went to bed on Saturday, July 19th, I saw that pictures of the day's events that had already been uploaded. By Sunday evening, full coverage had been posted on various message-boards, and highlights were available on *You Tube* within days!

Instead, I'm just going to include a couple of photos of yours truly and my daughter, Elizabeth. This was her first time meeting the stars, and she was thrilled! While I had a fantastic time, there were a few times during the weekend when I had a "been there, done that" feeling. Each time I beheld her delight, I quickly snapped out of it.

Interested readers are advised to visit www.dsboards.com to find posts that provide detailed coverage of the convention.



Barnabas Der Vampir

By Joe Escobar

As a child, **Dark Shadows** was like the proverbial forbidden fruit. I was only six when it was at its peak in the 1897 storyline. My Mom was firm; the show was off-limits. I'd occasionally catch the odd scene here and there at a friend's house, but I knew little about the show. It did fascinate me enough to borrow a few of the Marilyn (AKA Dan) Ross novels in 1976. Although slightly disappointed that Barnabas was not in **The Mystery of Collinwood**, I read it anyway. By the time I was finished, **Barnabas, Quentin, and the Body Snatchers** was available to me. At this point, I was hooked. The next six years were spent scouring used book stores for the rest of the series.

Even though the series was syndicated in Boston in '76 and '77, most of my early impressions of the show were formed by those novels. WLVI chose to run the show at 11:00 PM, well beyond my normal bedtime. I was only able catch a handful of episodes. Having missed the first couple of months, I had no idea, for instance, that Barnabas had been chained in his coffin since 1795! According to Ross's version, he'd been wandering the world righting wrongs and aiding damsels in distress.

It's ironic that while I was on my quest to complete my collection, nine installments were translated and released in Germany. Ten in all were made available overseas. **Barnabas Collins and the Mysterious Ghost** had come out in '74, long before I'd been reading the DS novels.

Germany has had a longstanding literary tradition that is akin to our old dime store novels. The Groschenroman, as they are called, are inexpensive publications that cross many genres, including westerns, science fiction, mysteries, and, of course, horror. One such series, **Vampir Horror Roman**, started reprinting the Ross novels under the umbrella title of *Der Vampir Barnabas*.

Much of what follows is conjecture. The truth is, there's not a whole lot of information on the internet about this subject. An article by horror fan Andreas Decker briefly summarizes the history of **Vampir Horror Roman**. He states that each installment was only about 65 pages, with each story running about 25,000 words. I estimate that a DS novel contains about 63,000 words. Using *Microsoft Word*, I typed a full line from one of the novels. I then went into Tools and ascertained that the line contained 10 words, or 51 characters. I repeated this process a number of times and came up with the same figure. Multiplying 10 by the number of lines on the page, 42, I ended up with an estimated 420 words per page. By that standard, a 150 page book could contain as many as 63,000 words! According to Decker there was "heavy editing" done to the subjects of this publication. If this information is correct, each story is boiled down to roughly 40% of its original content, "Heavy editing" indeed!

I found some bibliographies online that had publication information for the reprints. Each one had 64 pages. Most of them were published in '77 and the last two in '78 and were translated by Karl Heinz Poppe. As mentioned previously, **Barnabas Collins and the Mysterious Ghost** came out four years earlier. No translator is given for that work. Decker credits an artist named C.A.M Thole with most of the first 200 issues' covers. **Barnabas Collins and the Mysterious Ghost** was in issue #68, so it's probable that he was the illustrator. Since the others fall well into the 200s, it's unknown, at this point, who drew them.

At any rate, these artists made no attempt whatsoever to faithfully render any of the actors on the show. This is hardly surprising, considering that the show was almost unknown there. Frid, at least, would most likely have had to be paid if they were going to use his likeness. Even with this in mind, the art is jarring. Ross portrays Barnabas as a handsome, Byronic hero. Many of the covers reveal a menacing and often grotesque monster, a kind of cross between Dracula and Mr. Hyde. Angelique, Christopher Jennings (in werewolf form) and Quentin also appear on one cover each and are also unrecognizable.

None of the novels' titles are translated exactly into German. In fact, most of them are completely different. For example **Barnabas Collins** was changed to **Sein erstes Opfer** or **His First Victim**. The names Barnabas and Quentin never appear in any of the German titles. Since the TV show was unknown there, neither designation would have been a particular selling point. Besides, since the series was called **Der Vampir Barnabas**, they really can't be blamed for changing **The Phantom and Barnabas Collins** to **The Tomb of the Phantoms**.

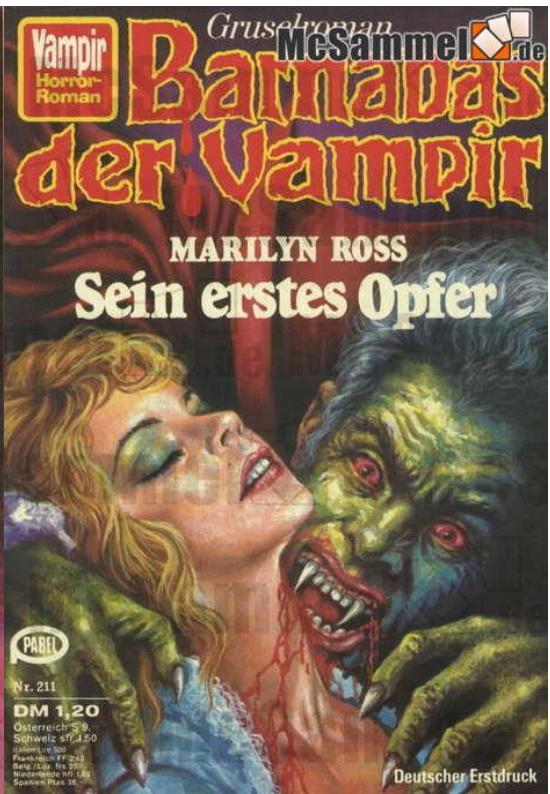
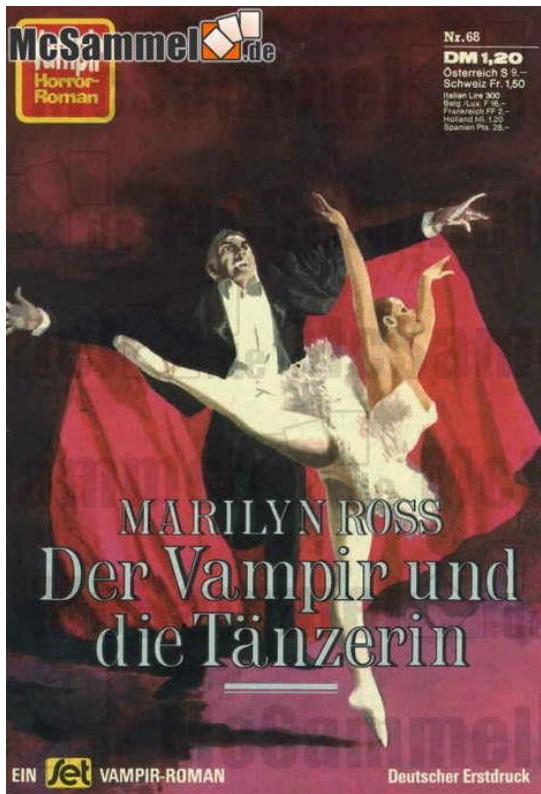
Other than the fact that the series started on a monthly schedule and later went bi-monthly, I've been able to find out almost nothing else. The fact that the title went bi-monthly, and that they opted not to publish any of the remaining 22 books, makes it seem likely that they were not very successful.

A Google search using the series title **Der Vampir Barnabas** reveals very little beyond what I've already written. There's a fairly favorable review of **Barnabas Collins**, which was re-released in 1991, perhaps to capitalize on the NBC remake. What are conspicuous in their absence are any significant nostalgic references to these issues. A couple of vendors make note of them in descriptions of the **Dark Shadows** DVD collections and a connection is made to **House of Dark Shadows**, but that's about it.

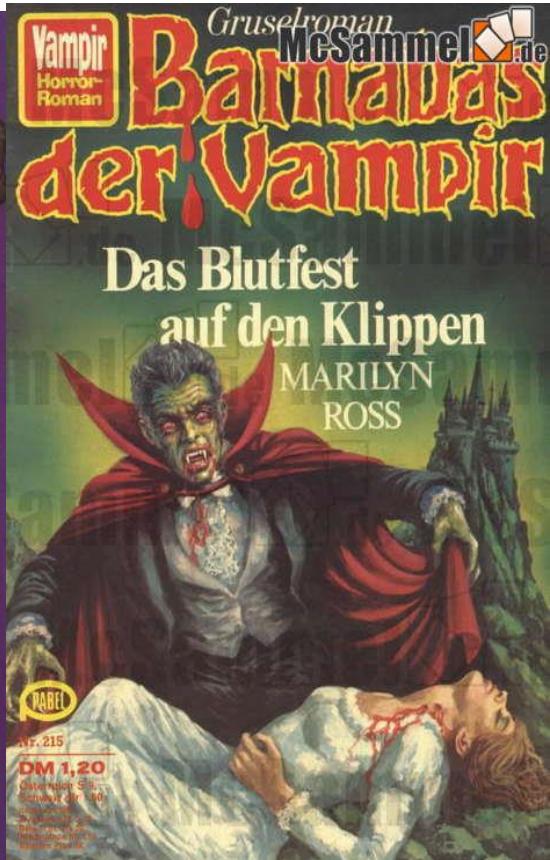
I could not help but be disappointed by this. As mindful as I am of the series' flaws, I rather fancied the idea that there might be many kindred spirits overseas who had discovered Barnabas in much the same way that I had. It would be interesting to meet one of those fans and compare notes.

I have included a bibliography that compiles all the publication information that I could find. Each entry lists the original title, the German one, and a translation back into English. I have also included the **Vampir Horror Roman** issue number. I am indebted to GOTHICK from the *Dark Shadows Forum* for providing me with invaluable help with the German tongue.

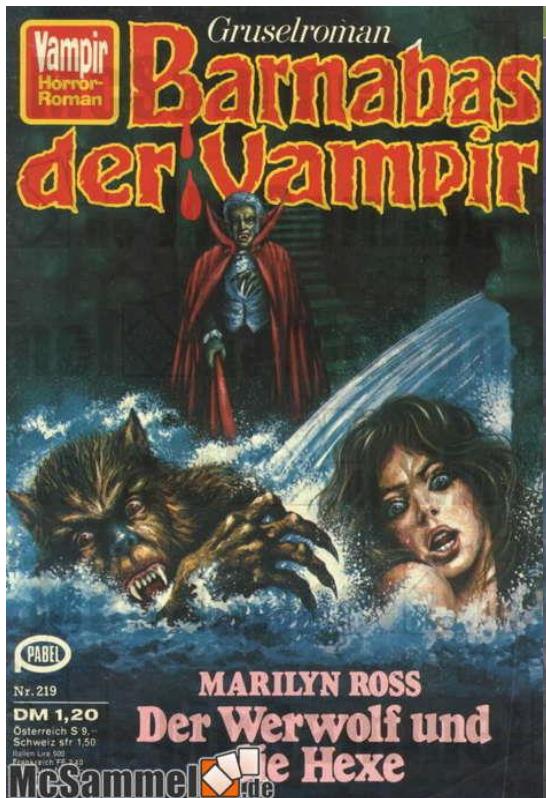
Original Title	German Title	Translation
Barnabas Collins and the Mysterious Ghost	Der Vampir und die Tänzerin 68	The Vampire and the Dancer
Barnabas Collins	Sein erstes Opfer 211	His First Victim
The Secret of Barnabas Collins	Das Blutfest auf den Klippen 215	Blood Feast on the Cliffs
The Foe of Barnabas Collins	Der Werwolf und die Hexe 219	The Werewolf and the Witch
The Demon of Barnabas Collins	Wenn der Totenvogel klagt 223	When the Bird of Death Sings
The Phantom and Barnabas Collins	Die Gruft der Phantome 227	The Tomb of the Phantoms
The Peril of Barnabas Collins	Der Blutgraf 231	The Blood Count
Barnabas Quentin and the Nightmare		
Assassin	Jagd auf Werwölfe 238	Hunting the Werewolves
Barnabas Quentin and the Haunted Cave	Die Geisterhöhle 245	The Ghost's Cave
Barnabas Quentin and the Avenging Ghost	Teufelsfrau von Collinwood 253	The Devil Woman from Collinwood



Barnabas Collins (reprint 1991)



The Secret of Barnabas Collins



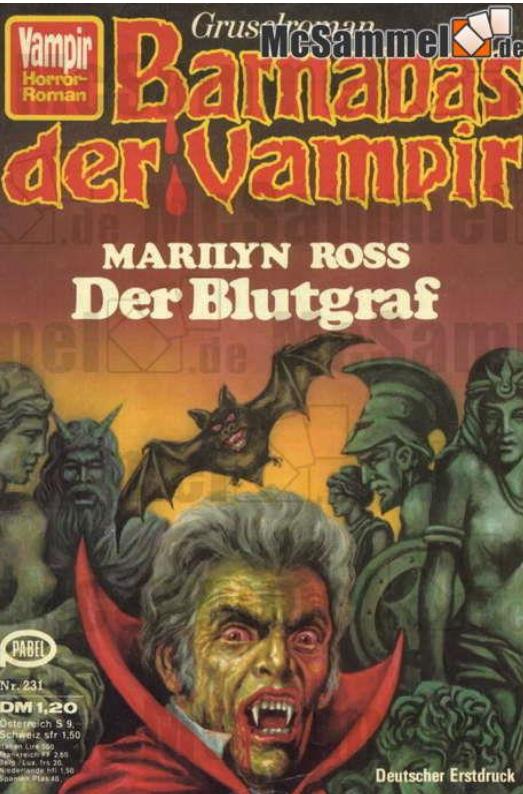
The Foe of Barnabas Collins



The Demon of Barnabas Collins



The Phantom and Barnabas Collins

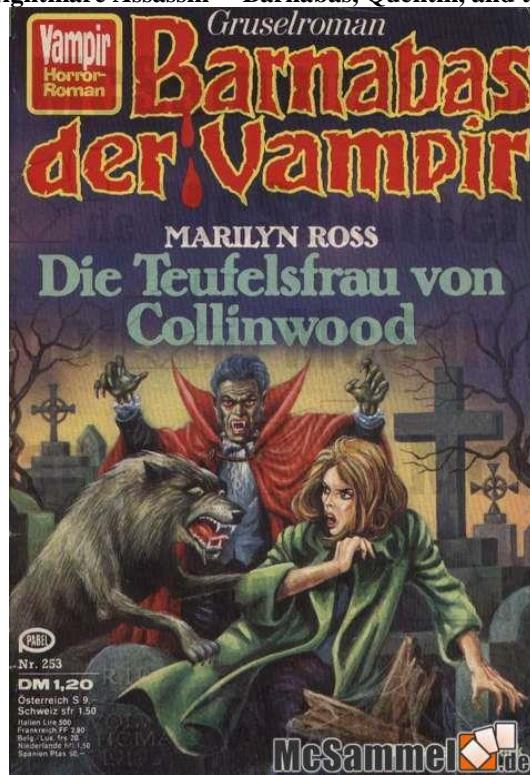


The Peril of Barnabas Collins



Barnabas, Quentin, and the Nightmare Assassin

Barnabas, Quentin, and the Haunted Cave



Barnabas, Quentin, and the Avenging Ghost

A Review of **Clothes of Sand** and **The Ghost Watcher**

By Joe Escobar

Although technically the third and fourth entries in **Big Finish Productions'** new line of dramatized readings, **Clothes of Sand** and **The Ghost Watcher** are the first containing new material. The first two were an audio condensation of Lara Parker's **Angelique's Descent**.

Both star Kathryn Leigh Scott and Alec Newman. Newman's portrayal of Barnabas was one of the few things I liked about the failed WB DS pilot. He makes a welcome return to DS here, playing a pair of new characters. Both works complement each other, each revolving to some degree around Maggie's two trips to Windcliff.

In their first outing together, Newman portrays the mythological Sandman. Maggie's association with the Sandman begins in childhood and is all very innocent at first. Each night he brings her sweet dreams. Later he returns during her commitment to Windcliff in 1967. The two plots run in parallel dovetailing at the end.

Ms. Scott is as versatile as ever, credibly switching from childhood to adulthood and making it sound easy. She runs the gamut from vulnerable to assertive and determined. It's hard to believe that it's been nearly 40 years since she regularly played Maggie Evans, and she makes it seem as if it were only yesterday.

Clothes of Sand gives us a Maggie who is in a fragile state. Reeling from her recent victimization by Barnabas, she must now fend off the sinister machinations of the Sandman.

Mr. Newman proves to be as adaptable as Ms. Scott. The Sandman morphs between sweetness and faux innocence to dark and sinister without skipping a beat. He even evokes a bit of sympathy at the end.

The Ghost Watcher is set after Maggie leaves Windcliff the second time. A question that comes to mind is: Why was she there? Maggie was sent to the institution in order to escape Roxanne Drew's attacks on her in 1970. When Barnabas and Julia traveled to 1840, they altered events, causing Roxanne to be destroyed. Upon their return, shouldn't everything have been fine with Maggie? But I'll accept that it's some kind of a time paradox and move on.

In this tale, Newman brings another new character to life, Ghost Hunter Extraordinaire Nathan Hawkins. The self proclaimed legendary slayer of such things as a dragons, feathered serpents, and vampires arrives in Collinsport to give a unique gift to the denizens of the dreary town. Maggie is drawn to him and caught up in the web of chaos he unwittingly unleashes upon the sleepy burg.

Once again, Kathryn Leigh Scott delivers a fine performance. This time, Maggie is much more assertive and self-reliant. This is the Maggie who took David in hand and stood up to the ghost of Quentin.

Likewise, Alec Newman creates an enigmatic and fascinating character. He makes Nathan's claims sound credible. He runs the gamut from heroic, if a bit boastful, to vulnerable and lost. I'd like to hear more of him in future installments of the **Big Finish** series.

While I was disappointed that a follow-up to the fully dramatized audio series has not materialized yet, I was very excited about receiving new stories that are set within the timeframe of the original series. Sam Evans, Carolyn Stoddard and Julia Hoffman, among others, are once again brought to life. Ms. Scott is especially effective when she portrays Julia. She wisely avoids doing an impression of Grayson Hall, choosing instead to reinterpret the character's

imperious, demanding, and often pompous demeanor. Likewise, her portrayal of Carolyn mimics some of Nancy Barrett's speech patterns. It's subtle, but adds a dimension that is frequently lacking when a single reader is given the task of portraying multiple characters. This is obvious when one compares audio books in the **Star Trek** series. William Shatner can competently record an audio book, especially if it's primarily about Captain Kirk, but James Doohan masterfully gave a performance in which he played each of the characters. It's this distinction that makes these two **Dark Shadows** dramatizations so satisfying.

The only major disappointment I've had regarding the entire **Big Finish** line is the absence of any familiar villains. We've seen, or rather heard the return of many familiar and beloved protagonists. I suppose Angelique could arguably be a notable exception, but it's hard to categorize her as friend or foe. I'd love to hear a story featuring Count Petofi or Reverend Trask.

That aside, **Clothes of Sand** and **The Ghost Watcher** deliver what they promise: haunting tales that just might inspire a nightmare or two.



www.bigfinish.com

Dark Shadows News

By Joe Escobar

It was reported at the *Dark Shadows Festival* that there would be 6 titles in all, in **Big Finish's** secondary line of dramatizations. Stuart Manning informed me that two more had been recorded with David Selby and Lara Parker. The release date for the first of these was set for September. Obviously, there's been a delay. No revised release date has been posted.

On July 26, Stephen Mark Rainey, the author of **Dark Shadows: Dreams of the Dark** posted on **The Blog Where Horror Dwells** that he's written a dramatization, tentatively titled **Dark Shadows: Path of Fate**. The release date has not set, but he estimated that it would be out later this year or early in 2009 and will feature Selby and Parker.

Last year, Moonstone Press released a crossover story in which Karl Kolchak met Barnabas. The tale was printed in **Kolchak: The Night Stalker Chronicles**. Apparently the short story "Interview With a Vampire?" was successful because they've announced what is, apparently, a comic book adaptation of the yarn in the upcoming **Night Stalker Annual**. It's made me tempted to speculate that they may be the most likely publisher of the next DS comic series.

Extreme Close-Up-Jean Graham

By Joe Escobar

“ECU! ECU!” was a cry often heard on the DS set. Lela Swift loved to utilize the extreme close-up or ECU when she directed. This in your face style of camera work gives the audience a chance to see every nuance of an actor’s performance. This column, if this publication goes beyond this issue, will focus on individuals who have made a difference in DS fandom.

Our first subject is someone who I am honored to call a friend. I’ve lost touch with her in the last fifteen years, but she’s still near and dear to my heart. Jean Graham is both a fantastic writer and a terrific person. She was there when DS fandom was founded and toiled tirelessly to help make the **Shadowcons** a success. Her work has appeared in numerous DS fanzines including, **The World of Dark Shadows**, **Inside the Old House**, and **Chosen Haunts**. She also founded her own fan publishing house, *Peacock Press*. All of this is just within the scope of **Dark Shadows**. She’s also been at least as active in the realms of **Blake’s Seven**, **Star Trek**, **Doctor Who**, and many, many others.

While I don’t remember for certain which of Jean’s work I read first, I do recall the one that made me sit up and take notice of her as a writer. **Dark Angel** was composed of nine **Dark Shadows** scripts. In them, she recaptured the essence of DS, returning to the mood and tension of 1967. The characters were flawlessly reincarnated, with each character’s dialogue perfectly tailored to the actor or actress who created it. Willie’s stammer, Barnabas’ halting speech, Quentin’s wit were all convincingly recreated. The plot revolves around a disillusioned and volatile Barnabas and the return of Angelique. It’s a pity this work does not seem to be in print any longer, or I’d go into more detail. Suffice to say, it’s worth picking up if you can find it. It was also available in an omnibus edition along with the sequels **Dark Lord** and **Dark Heir**.

In *Epitaphs*, a series of short stories, she takes us into the minds of some of our dear departed friends, and enemies. Using the first person point of view, each character speaks to us from beyond the grave. Via this vehicle, we are privy to the suffering of Naomi, Jenny and Millicent. We also receive insights into the evil machinations of the Trasks, Laura, Aristede, and Nicholas.

This format affords the opportunity to flesh out these characters and speculate about their pasts. For example, we are able to be with Naomi on her first day at Collinwood. Laura reflects upon the merits or lack of them, of each of her previous husbands. Through Aristede’s eyes, we are able to witness his first meeting with Count Petofi.

1795 was the inspiration for many of her stories. Arguably the best among them are an arc of tales that focus upon the early lives of Barnabas and Jeremiah. In “Blood Brother” we find out what happened when Joshua was away during the war. In “The Forsaken,” “Foreshadowed,” and “The Lost Chapter” various skeletons in Jeremiah’s closet are brought to light. While these secrets sprang from author’s speculation, they are rooted in questions raised by the convoluted DS plot.

A multitude of Jean Graham’s stories are available online, free of charge. Her website also contains a wealth of gems from other franchises, in addition to DS. **Star Trek**, **Battlestar Galactica**, **Forever Knight**, and several others can be found there. A word to the wise though, don’t procrastinate. I’ve been informed that the site will only be up through the rest of October. While she is looking for a new home to host her web-pages, it may take a while. Get them while you can.

Jean Graham’s Fan Fiction Archive <http://members.aol.com/JeanB7/>